



**Pitt-Greenville Soccer Association
Greenville Recreation & Parks**



Coaching Manual

Athletic Office 252.329.4550



I volunteered to coach...now what?

Listed below are some tips to help coaches for the upcoming season:

- **Learn the league specific rules and policies.** As the coach, it is essential you attend pre-season organizational meetings and make sure you read and understand league rules. Be sure your assistant coach understands the rules as well. Pre-season meetings are a great time to get clarification on rules and policies you may not fully understand.
- **Understand the value of your assistant.** Assistants not only help run practice, but they can also serve as a sounding board for you and for the players as well. Be sure to maintain an open line of communication between you and your assistant.
- **Have a parent from the team volunteer to be the team parent.** Designating someone for this position lets them feel like they're a greater part of the team. The team parent takes on the duties of organizing who will provide snack for each game, plan team activities and so forth. Having another parent focus on these things will allow you to concentrate on coaching.
- **Hold a team meeting at/before the very first practice.** Use this time to introduce yourself and your assistant. It is also the perfect time for parents of the team to meet and get to know each other. During this meeting you should make the parents aware of the league rules and policies so they will understand your coaching philosophy. At this time you should also let them know your expectations of the players and the parents. Be sure to explain the importance of players and parents exhibiting good sportsmanship. Make sure to find out from parents if their child has any medical conditions you should be aware of in the event of an emergency during a practice or game. Address any potential scheduling conflicts. Do this by finding out what other activities the players are involved in and find out from parents ahead of time what days could potentially be problematic for them regarding practices or games. Make it known to parents it is expected for all players to attend all practices and games, and if they are unable to, you should be notified in advance. Take the time to go over GRPD's Parent's Code of Ethics (located on the following page).
- **Build a solid rapport with each player.** This is easily accomplished by getting to know everyone's name as quickly as possible. During practice, spend a few minutes with each child. Address them by their name and compliment them when they do something well. Name tags for players during the first few practices can help everyone get acquainted more easily if they are not familiar with one another.
- **Coach by walking around.** This provides a greater opportunity to bond with each player; the more you do it, they will begin to feel more comfortable. Also in doing this, you are more likely to better understand the differences between each child and find specific ways to motivate them.



Greenville Recreation & Parks Department

Parent's Code of Ethics

- I will encourage good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches and officials at every game, practice or other youth sports events.
- I will place the emotional and physical well-being of each child ahead of a personal desire to win.
- I will support the coaches and officials working with my child in order to encourage a positive and enjoyable experience for all.
- I will demand a sports environment for my child that is free from drugs, tobacco and alcohol and will refrain from their use at all Greenville Recreation & Parks Department's youth sports events.
- I will remember the game is for youth—not adults.
- I will do my best to make the youth sports experience fun for my child.
- I will help my child enjoy the youth sports experience by doing whatever I can, such as being a respectful fan, assisting with coaching or character development or providing transportation.
- I will treat other players, coaches, fans and officials with respect.

I hereby pledge to provide positive support, care and encouragement for my child participating in Greenville Recreation & Parks Department's youth sports by following the Parent's Code of Ethics. I understand failure to comply could result in my suspension from youth sports events.

Team Management

- **Discipline**
 - It's not necessary to have an extensive set of rules for the team; instead, have a few rules stand out that you will emphasize throughout the course of the season.
 - Examples
 - Having players show up at a specified time before practices and games.
 - Letting you know ahead of time if a player won't be able to make a practice/game.
 - Players and parents are expected to exhibit sportsmanlike behavior at all times.
- **The Ballhog**
 - If you have a player on your team who likes to control the ball and take all the shots, rather than calling them out during practice or games, pull them aside and explain to them the importance of working with their teammates. Feel free to acknowledge what they do well, but also challenge and encourage them to be just as good at finding and passing to an open teammate.
- **Running Up the Score**
 - There are times when games can become one-sided and one team scores a much more significant amount of goals than the other. In this instance, do not allow your team to continue to run up the score. Instead, tell your team to pass the ball at least 5 or 6 times before a shot is taken. In doing this you are getting your team to work on their passing and ball movement skills, thus making them better all-around players.
- **Parents**
 - As a coach you will have to deal with various issues and concerns from parents, ranging from playing time to game strategies. How you handle these things as they come up can affect the course of the season. During your first team meeting, let it be known to the parents the best times to approach you. When they do come to you with a concern, let them say their piece – uninterrupted – and tell them you'll think about their suggestions and figure out a way to best address their concerns. Always respond in a positive, non-confrontational manner and make sure things don't get out of hand.
- **Losing Games**
 - Enduring a losing season is one of the greater challenges a coach faces. Rather than dwell on the negativity associated with losing, it is your job as the coach to remain upbeat and positive. Find something the team did well and focus on that. Praise them for the effort they put forth in spite of the loss.

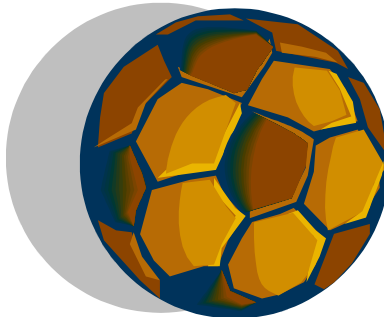
Running an Efficient Practice

An organized and efficiently run practice allows you to get more accomplished than expected. Some tips for running an efficient practice are below:

- Be organized and have a plan.
 - Have a back-up plan just in case some drills are not being picked up as easily by the players.
- Break down the practice hour into 15 or 20 minute blocks.
 - Start and stop each block with a quick whistle.
 - Include water and bathroom breaks.
- Keep things moving so the players are engaged and on the go.
 - Lessen the number of drills involving players just standing around. This decreases the likelihood of players getting bored and losing focus.
- If you have to stop practice to teach a fundamental or demonstrate a play, put yourself on the clock.
 - Make your point, keep it short, and keep the action moving.
- Keep practice interesting and fun.

Things You Need To Know About Our Youngest Future Stars

- Someone will dribble and score in the wrong goal and smile at you after they score. Celebrate with them!
- Be prepared to tie 10 shoelaces per practice.
- Several players will pick the ball up with their hands.
- Players will not understand when you say “spread out!”
- Many players will walk off the field during play to sit with their parents.
- In the eyes of a four-year old, a game of 3 versus 3 is really 1 versus 5.
- A four year old still struggles to share their toys. Therefore they will not pass (share) the soccer ball (toy) to their teammates.
- Many players will cry if they fall down or for no reason at all!
- Parents will yell “KICK IT!” You need to say “Control it.”
- Encourage “defenders” to move up with the play and not hang back near the goal.
- Kick-offs requires the first touch of the ball to move forward. This doesn’t mean we kick the ball to the other team (American football). Have your team keep possession and tap the ball forward to a teammate.
- During the course of the season, your players will do something absolutely hysterical. Make sure you laugh and enjoy the time spent with them.



Stages of Development

Soccer training must be age specific!

Stage 1 - Introductory Stage

Ages 4-6

Stage 1 is the introductory stage for kids. They are meeting the ball and the game and the practice environment, literally “feeling their way” into soccer. The most important considerations for practice and games are freedom to move, positive encouragement, trial and error and fantasy.

Practices should be fun: stimulating, low-key, child-like, dynamic events. The central elements of every practice should be the natural curiosity and eagerness of the child... and the ball. The emphasis at practice: touching the ball, becoming “friends with the ball”, understanding how it moves and acts.

There should be virtually no talk about tactics and no fitness work. No laps or running without a ball, or calisthenics, etc. There may be goalkeepers, but no goalkeeper training!

Technical Guidelines:

- Just "playing with the ball", getting the feel of it.
- Becoming "friends with the ball".
- Getting used to the reality of playing on one leg.
- Guiding the ball straight and to the sides with the insides of both feet.
- Kicking the ball accurately with the insides of the feet over 8 to 10 yards.

Tactical Guidelines:

- Really simple instructions:
 - "Yes! Run up and down the field!"
 - "Look around a little!"
 - "Shoot! Score a lot of goals!"
 - "Try to win the ball - and if the other team has the ball, get in their way!"
 - "The ball should go in that goal - not this one!"
- Now the game is often: "one against the other team".
- Kids at this age think: "Where the ball is, that's where I want to be." It's completely against their way of thinking to move away from the ball, to spread out, or to "go wide".
- Virtually no instruction in the rules - just rely on the kids' intuitions and innate sense of fair play.

Fitness Guidelines:

- Turn them loose as much as possible: let them run, chase, hunt the ball, and kick it all over the place, MOVE!
- Nothing without the ball!

The Practice Environment:

- This is their world - as much as possible should be on their terms.
- Everything here is new: getting the kids used to the feeling of this soccer place is a big objective.
- Kids at this age are playful, concerned with themselves, absorbed with trying to control the ball; attention spans are small.
- Once your practice activities begin, the play of the kids may get chaotic. No problem!
- Lots of footwork and dribbling games: the aim is a maximum number of ball touches.
- Many repetitions in skill activities.
- One ball per player: "Everyone should have a toy!"
- No "positions".

Stage 2 - Exploratory Stage

Ages 7-8

Technical Guidelines:

- Continuing to become "friends with the ball": maximum ball touches and repetitions in footwork activities.
- Starting and stopping with the ball; changing direction with the insides and outsides of both feet.
- Turning through 180 degrees with the ball with the soles of the feet and the insides and outsides of the feet: emphasis on balance.
- Controlling rolling balls (passes) with the insides and outsides of the feet: beginning to develop good "first touch" with ground balls.
- Accurate passes over 10 to 15 yards and beginning to kick with the instep (laces), and players are beginning to consider the "weight" of passes.

Tactical Guidelines:

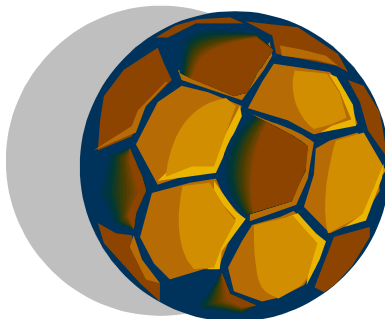
- Beginning to get a sense of the game and its demands and possibilities; beginning to see soccer in terms of teamwork.
- Learning to relax with the ball and to protect it: "Try to get your body between the ball and that opponent who wants to take it from you!"
- An aggressive attitude about individual defending: "Press the ball when you lose it! Really hassle the ball possessor!"
- Spreading out and making the field big when your team has the ball. When your team does not have the ball, getting together a little, trying to protect the middle of the field and the space in front of your goal.
- Introduction of the concept of the "three main moments of soccer": our team has the ball; our team does not have the ball, and the transition between possession and loss of possession and the reverse.
- Players are cultivating a "What if?" or "What's next?" mentality.

Fitness Guidelines:

- Emphasis on balance and "playing on one leg" - differentiating between standing leg and playing leg.
- Nothing without the ball.

The Practice Environment:

- Reliance on the idea that "The game is the greatest teacher": virtually no coaching. Letting the kids play! Perhaps a 20 second comment every four or five minutes.
- High tolerance for mistakes and trial and error.
- No specializing by position.
- Practice is "Play Time".
- These years are all about coordinating the nervous system and the muscles.



Stage 3 - Technical Stage

Ages 9-10

For Stage Three, the primary emphasis, as always, is on fun and dynamic movement. This is the time when technical development - mastery of the ball and the acquisition of skill - is vital. Repetition of "soccer movements," small-sided games, trial and error, and a patient, coherent introduction of basic tactical ideas should form the basis of practices. Refining skills, absorbing soccer's truths and solving soccer's innumerable little problems are most important now. Still, at this stage, we should not be concerned with strength training and isolated fitness work, nor with elaborate tactical planning. It's all about repetition and patient advancement as the kids seek to become all-round "ball players."

Technical Guidelines:

- Turning with the ball through 180 degrees, continued, with soles of feet, insides, and outsides - now, "More speed, bend your knees more, get your head up, don't get the ball stuck under you!"
- Practice changes of speed and direction with the ball. Guiding the ball at a 45-degree angle off a straight line: the technical rudiments of beating an opponent with a dribble.
- Perhaps some "Coerver training": Dribbling and feinting moves and these moves practiced under pressure.
- Stronger and more accurate instep kicks over 15 to 20 yards.
- The essentials of heading are introduced, but very little time spent on heading.
- Continuing to master receiving ground balls with the insides and outsides of the feet. With an accurate "first touch" getting into a running stride to dribble, or setting up a pass or a shot. Should be comfortable with the insides and outsides of both feet.
- "Driving" or "cruising" with the ball: running fast with the ball, generally in straight lines.
- Shielding the ball effectively, "sideways on" to the defender.
- Continuing to coordinate the nervous system and the muscles.
- Shooting accurately - keeping the ball in the frame of the goal - with the insides of the feet and the insteps.
- As a player begins to master the ball they will start to become intrigued with juggling and tricks.

Tactical Guidelines:

- Positioning goal side of attackers when you lose the ball: cutting off the path to the goal. Marking opponents tightly.
- Elemental idea of support: helping the player with the ball. "Form a pair" with the player on the ball; other players should stay away and make the field big.
- Don't wait for the ball - go to it!
- Playing away from pressure when you receive a ball - and move it at a new angle.
- Understanding the difference between passing to feet and passing to space
- Getting free of markers: "checking off" and creating space for yourself. "Make an area of green grass around you!"
- Wall pass, the give-and-go, the 1 - 2. Beginning to build up options for the two attackers in a two versus one situation.
- Lots of 1 v 1 confrontations to perfect timing in attack and defense. Emphasis on the "three main moments of soccer".
- Building up an aggressive attitude about shooting.
- Recognizing when you're under pressure and when you're not under pressure when you receive a pass.
- Beginning to establish a vocabulary of communication.
- Players should be looking up and around and away from the ball, on both attack and defense. No "ball watching".

Fitness Guidelines:

- Nothing without the ball.
- No strength or endurance training.

The Practice Environment:

- Practice is a combination of "play time" and a learning environment.
- Some pressured play in confined spaces.
- No specializing by positions.

Stage 4 - Transition Stage

Ages 11-12

Technical Guidelines:

- Kicking with the inside and the outside of the instep.
- Chipping.
- Effective shielding from the immediate opponent.
- Disguise in dribbling: body feints, change of speed and direction, wrong footing defenders. Learning three or four moves to use to beat a defender.
- Beginning of consistent practice of heading - regular, but not much.
- Side block tackle.
- Shooting bouncing balls: volleys and half volleys.
- Now, in receiving balls, players consciously set up their second touch with their first touch.

Tactical Guidelines:

- Switching the direction of play or the point of attack.
- The overlap.
- Awareness of the different "climates" in the three thirds of the field: attack, midfield, defense.
- Understanding the need for quick transition from offense to defense and defense to offense.
- Continuing to focus on the "three main moments", with particular emphasis on transition.
- Understanding the difference between passing to feet and passing to space.
- Good body position when asking for the ball: facing field or sideways, watching ball and immediate opponent, etc.
- Making good choices about trying to penetrate or protecting the ball, based on whether or not there is pressure when you receive the ball. Consistently intelligent first touches upon receiving.
- Reading the body position of a defender: hips square or hips turned, has she or he committed to winning the ball or not? etc.
- Understanding the difference between losing the ball and giving it away.
- Correct body position of defenders challenging for the ball: "turned, not square."
- Positioning "ball side" as well as "goal side" in marking.
- Second defender covering the first defender.
- Solid defensive understanding against one opponent and when confronted by two opponents.

Fitness Guidelines:

- Nothing without the ball.
- No strength or endurance training.

The Practice Environment:

- "Play time" and a learning environment.
- Some pressured play in confined areas; games of numbers up and numbers down; one of the best is 5 v 2.
- No specializing by positions.
- Duels at full speed: lots of 1 v 1 and 2 v 1 situations.
- Emphasis still on technical development: the acquisition of skills.